

**Remarks**

Claims 1-20 were pending. Claims 2, 6-7, 9, 12-15, and 18-20 have been canceled, leaving claims 1, 3-5, 8, 10-11, and 16-17 in the application.

Claims 1-11 and 14-20 were rejected under §112, second paragraph, and have been canceled or amended. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11 and 15-20 were rejected as anticipated by DENES et al. 6,096,564. Claim 14 was rejected as unpatentable over DENES et al. in view of JACOB et al. 5,741,460. Claim 1 has been amended and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections are respectfully requested.

DENES et al. do not disclose that the gaseous plasma is produced in an enclosure that includes a generator of microwaves, where the post-discharge flow that issues from the gaseous plasma is admitted via a conduit into a sterilization chamber in which the objects to be treated are disposed. By contrast, DENES et al. disclose a sterilizing device in which the plasma, not the post-discharge flow from the plasma, contacts the objects to be sterilized. The objects are in the same enclosure where the plasma is produced, not in a sterilization chamber into which the post-discharge flow is admitted via a conduit. The plasma in DENES et al. can be harmful to the objects being treated; the present invention avoids this problem.

Further, DENES et al. do not disclose the metal object holder in the sterilization chamber of claim 1, where the metal object holder heats up under the effect of the recombination of the nitrogen, and heats the object held by the metal object holder.

Accordingly, claim 1 avoids the rejection under §102. The dependent claims are allowable for at least the same reasons.

The other cited references do not make up for the shortcomings of DENES et al. and thus the claims are believed to be in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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